

## **Joint Statement by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation on People-to People Connections**

The renewed relationship between the United States and Russia depends not just on the actions of our governments, but on the energy, creativity, and commitment of our two peoples. Each year, thousands of Americans and Russians now travel freely between our countries, from athletes to artists, from scientists to students. Thanks in part to the work of the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission, Americans and Russians have more possibilities to increase personal and professional connections in business, research, education, culture, tourism and many other areas.

Over the past year, the Commission has helped to significantly expand youth sports exchanges, university partnerships and cultural programs, both in the United States and in Russia. Broadening of contacts among non-governmental organizations and increasing collaboration on timely issues for Americans and Russians have been two priorities of the Commission's work. We have organized exhibits that celebrate the achievements of our writers and performing artists, and that recognize our shared history. We are working together to foster academic excellence through increased exchanges among students, teachers, and researchers, particularly in the fields of science and technology. New technologies are playing a role in these efforts to disseminate information and ideas. Young people in both countries are using new tools like You Tube to share creative experiences and to exchange views on issues, from the rule of law to modern dance.

Despite progress on many fronts, we recognize that making personal connections is harder than it should be for American and Russian representatives in several Commission working groups have raised the need to make procedures for travel easier, particularly for businesspeople and scientists. Both sides are committed to seeking ways to facilitate travel between our countries, consistent with the laws and regulations of each country. By streamlining or clarifying the requirements for travel, work, and study, we hope to further strengthen the connections between our peoples and energize the relationship between our nations.

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